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(SNP102) Ray A. Nicholson interviewed by
Dorothy Noble Smith, transcribed by Sharon G.
Marston

Ray A. Nicholson

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

NARRATOR: Mr. Ray A. Nicholson
INTERVIEWER: Mrs. Dorothy Smith
DATE: August 14, 1979
PLACE: Old Rag and Nicholson Hollow

TRANSCRIBED BY:

Sharon Marston

COMPLETED DATE:

March 17, 1980

D.S.: We are interviewing Mr. Ray Nicholson. It is Ray? That is your actual name?

R.N.: Right. Ray A. Nicholson. That's right.

D.S.: Okey. Who lived at the foot of Nicholson Hollow...near Neathers and then lived at Old Rag.

R.N.: That's right. Yea..I was younger over there and then I come over above Neather's Mill..see.

D.S.: I see, so you were originally from Old Rag and then...

R.N.: That's where I .. when I, when I, I reckon I wasn't but about eight years old then, and then when we moved over there and then after the park..after the park taken all the land.. then we moved to Winchester and then we come back here. Actually that's where we got this place here..through the park..Yea see.. they give us..anybody had land in the park they bought this land for anyone who couldn't find homes and that's the way we got this home.

D.S.: I see. Fine. Well, it's a nice house.

R.N.: Well, we got the land and everything. See.

D.S.: How much land?

R.N.: Well, about sixty some acres. I sold some off..some mountain land off. Got about fifty some acres left. Quite a nice place.

D.S.: Great!

R.N.: That's the way..that's *what caused us to get* this place. If they hadn't a did that..we might have been some place else, but that's the way we did *it*.

D.S.: What is your mother's maiden name?

R.N.: It's Annie Claudia Nicholson.

D.S.: Clauden..?

R.N.: C l a u d i a .. Annie Claudia Nicholson.

D.S.: I had never heard the name Claudia up there in the mountains.

R.N.: Uhhuh..well maybe you just never..maybe it's just the way it works...I guess. You just never had heard it.

D.S.: Do you know where her family came from?

R.N.: Yes. Her mother came from Page County..around Luray. Printz.. she was a Printz.

D.S.: Oh she was a Printz?

R.N.: Yea,that's right.

D.S.: Uhhuh..and her father was a ..

R.N.: Was a ^{Finchem} ~~Finch~~... Her father was Boo Finchem.

D.S.: Finchum. Oh I see then her name is actually Finchum. And then she married a Nicholson..Married Trent Nicholson's son. Nicholson.

D.S.: Okey then so her maiden name was Finchum.

R.N.: That's right. That's right.. Oh that's what you wanted to know. Excuse me. I misunderstood you.

D.S.: Yea. Oh yea, there were Finchum's there. Uh...Have you any recollection..did anyone ever say where your family originally came from? How they found the mountians?

R.N.: Um, I don't know about that. It isn't much use to ask my mother.. she's so..she wouldn't know..she's too, you know...I really don't know about that..I can't say.

D.S.: Were there many children in your family?

R.N.: Yea, uh, uh..in this immediate family right here four of us..five.. one is dead. The baby died when it was about six months old..

That's was back bout the time the park taken the place over there.

D.S.: Oh dear..what happened?

R.N.: Well I don't know, it just .. well .. it just .. it was defected or something .. I just don't know what it's trouble was. Then you never know..Doctors you know didn't know much then.

D.S.: Yea. that's right.

R.N.: Probably today..it'd be living you see.

D.S.: Bet you used Dr. Ross didn't you?

R.N.: Yea..half shot..oh, that will go on that won't it?

D.S.: Did he used to drink?

R.N.: Oh yes indeedy.

D.S.: Noone's ever told me that.

R.N.: Yes indeedy..I know that

D.S.: I don't blame him..Boy the amount of work for that man.

R.N.: He still did his job see. So..he just drank a little.

D.S.: Uhhum, yea, right. Uh..now you say until you were eight years old you lived in Old Rag.

R.N.: Right..

D.S.: What sort of a house was that?

R.N.: The Old Rag's go down..Well, you come up from Syrie..and you ~~go might~~ ^{it's right} near to the park line..the line is just right up there.. a right steep hill.. a great big rock with dry apples on it. It's a uh monstrous rock..and that's the place, uh, where my grandfather lived...I reckon his grandfather lived there..I don't know..for years and years. That's the place..

D.S.: Was it a log house?

R.N.: Yea..part log and part weatherboarding I think. The house is still there. Some people has bought it..that's been a long.. you know, it's been fifty years ago. So this house is still there.

D.S.: Oh great. Did it have a root cellar, do you know?

R.N.: I believe it did..I believe..it had a cellar yea.

D.S.: Yea. When you were very small, uh, did you have any playmates that you can recall?

R.N.: Yes, uh...JohnNicholson right down below us had some boys..a couple of them, but I don't remember their names now..it's..uh.. they lived down below us on that side over there where you're talking about right now. But I can't think...Lonnie, I believe one of them was but I don't know which one..it's been so long, I just can't think of the name..I can remember the faces..just can't think of the names. I tell you my memory ain't that bad, it's just been so long you just can't tell them apart. You see.

D.S.: Right. Do you recall what you used to play?

R.N.: Oh, I tell you one thing I used to do..Us boys and girls on Sunday's we'd go cut grape vines loose in the mountains, and I tell you one thing..it was real dangerous..and we'd swing on them grape vines and one time I struck a tree...this is no lie..and I had to climb down the tree to the roots of it..there was a Brown boy *Homer Brown* ~~from home~~..my first cousin..and uh, Mazy Brown my aunt over in there and we played with them all the time.. we used to do that, and go swimming..and uh fishing, stuff like that when we were real young. You know, fish on them streams..

D.S.: Sure. The fishing was good, wasn't it.

R.N.: Oh, that was the best..Cedar Run, and all them creeks up in there going back in the mountain..had the pretties trout and everything was, them days.

D.S.: Sure. Right, uh, when you lived in Old Rag, you used Syria as your store..

R.N.: Old Rag, uh...my daddy was a mail carrier..he carried mail from Syria to Madison and I believe ^{he} ~~we~~ went by Syria..but there was an OldRag post office. ~~That's~~ **right**....Somebody else carried from Syria to Old Rag..I forgot who it was now..but somebody local in there.

D.S.: You know I've heard about another store that was there near the post office. Was it....?

R.N.: Yea, uh..Butler. Mr...some Butler. John? Butler. I think his name was. John Austin Butler..maybe it was John Butler. He had a store like you coming up on the Syria side..it was on the right and the post office was on the left. Then it was right.. then that road would ^{there} ~~bare~~ and go right up to Pollock's place on the Skyline Drive. I've walked that up there several times.. all the way up there.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Now that must have been a very small store, because everybody talks about going to Syria from *Old Rag*

R.N.: It was. It was..well it just had a few shelves. Had coffee and sugar and Kerosene..stuff like that..what people had to have them days. Well you know wasn't no money them days.. and they growed everything they made them days practically..outside them three things. See.

D.S.: Sure. Do you recall how large the vegetable garden was?

R.N.: Yea. They were big then. I don't know..a whole lot more than they do now. That's what they went out for. Yea they really grew stuff. They canned and uh dried beans, ~~dried~~ apples and uh cracked walnuts. Oh just everything. Canned cherries..
go
~~grow~~ in the mountains..a lot of cherry trees in through the mountain .. see

D.S.: Yes. They grew wild didn't they?

R.N.: Yes and they were good too. People over there..they knowed what kind to get. There was a certain kind to get..a red heart was better than a black heart.

D.S.: Yea, uhuh. Uh, and you had cows?

R.N.: Yea. Everybody kept a few cows..for milk. That's right. And they put a little patch of corn out..They would take one horse.. maybe, and it was so rocky, but that land was so rich..it would grow corn see. And they'd put out enough to feed the cattle in the wintertime. What cows they had..three or four..some of them had five or six.

D.S.: Yea. Then you didn't take any cornmeal down to the *mill*.

R.N.: Yea..well I've done that. When we..

moved down to Neathers Mill, and I've ridden a mule and taken.. shelled the corn..and taken it down to mill and grind it, bring it back and bake the bread. My mother baked the bread..that was my job and I hated it. I did..as a kid you know..real young. Say ten years old then.

D.S.: You had to carry it?

R.N.: No..I put it on a mule and I rode him bareback. Rode this mule.. gentle mule..now, and I had to ride him about a mile..mile and a

half. I rode him down to Neather's Mill Store..you been up that road.?

D.S.: Yea.

R.N.: Well that old store..that's where we ground it..on the right hand side.^{*Sip Muthers*} ~~that Bill Meadows~~..was the man that ground the meal. And take the corn down there..we had to shell the corn and take it down there and he'd grind it up and bring it back. It was good.

D.S.: How do you shell corn?

R.N.: Well we shelled it by hand..they had corn shellers..a lot of people. We just shelled it by hand then. Then..now..course as time went on..they'd take it to the mill and they'd shell it for you..see. We shelled it..after corn gets old, you can take your hand and just hull it right off fast. Just put the earl in your hand..give it a little squeeze and *it* starts rolling and just jumps right off.

D.S.: Oh really..I'll be darn.

R.N.: Yea. We shelled a lot of corn by hand. At lot of it. All of it was shelled by hand in the ~~early~~ days. I remember right along then some of them had things you could put corn..you could turn it you know..this ear of corn would go through it and it would come out in a container see. You'd have a basket or something to catch it in.

D.S.: Sure right. Okey so..uh then when you were eight years old your family moved. Why?

R.N.: Moved over...Why?

D.S.: Uhum.

R.N.: Alright. I'll tell you why. My grandmother..my mother's mother died...and nobody to stay with my grand...grandpap Finchum..you see that's what I called him, see. So mama moved over there to take..to help him out. That's the whole reason of it see.

D.S.: I get it. Uhhum. What was your father's name.

R.N.: Beljum S. Nicholson.

D.S.: Beljum..uhhuh. Alright, you were eight years old. Were you excited about moving?

R.N.: Uh..really I..uh..didn't like it too good. You know..too young to know anything then. I tell you the truth right now..it was the best thing that ever happened..but I really wasn't..you know how a kid is at that age..I really..

D.S.: Yea. Had you gone to school there?

R.N.: Yea, I had been...now when I lived over there at Old Rag..I went to a little school right over the flat going down towards Neather's Mill. Now mama used to pack my lunch in a little half gallon bucket. Make little biscuits..wasn't no white bread or nothing then..loaf bread or what you call it..and I 'member there was a Dr..Preacher *Morris* he was a school teacher and a preacher and they had the school..they had preaching in the schoolhouse and have school in it too. Used it for both..and uh, I remember that just as good as can be. That was the first school I ever went to.

D.S.: Yea. Uuhuh. Sure. What did they teach?

R.N.: Well, the first grades I guess..the very first grades..I remember the very first grades, cause I was so young. So young.

D.S.: Uhhum. You went regardless of the weather?

R.N.: Well, uh yea we did. It had to be right bad if we..we walked *didn't*

it wasn't nothing for us to walk a couple miles..that was just good exercise..see. Kids!

D.S.: Sure.

R.N.: Yea. And uh..the weather didn't stop us. We'd go on through the snow. That was a lot of fun for us. It was.

D.S.: Did you have boots..or?

R.N.: Yea, we were uh, pretty fortunate to have something on our feet. We kept warm. We never went cold.

D.S.: Yea. Did you wear shoes in the summer?

R.N.: No, uh, well..we couldn't wear our shoes out.. We had to sort of save them. I went barefoot. I love to go barefoot. And I'll tell you another thing. We usta go out..my mother and daddy would have us to drive the cows out and be frost on the ground and we'd be anxious to go barefoot anyway..and you know where a cow lays it would be warm, and man we'd jump from one place to the other where the old cow been laying to warm my feet. That's right. I can remember that just as good. That's the truth now.. I'm tell- you now the real truth.

D.S.: You know its a wonder you didn't all get frostbitten.

R.N.: Ah, we was tough. I tell you if you grew up that way..and was accustomed to it..you never got sick. Wasn't none of us ever sick. Just..I don't know..you kinda get..you might bring a guy..a person in the city in, ^{all the time} been housed in..not the city.. but been housed in and put him right out, and he might catch a cold quicker than a guy that's been innaculated to it..I'd say. Just kinda went along with the weather, see.

D.S.: Right. By the way, how did you keep rabbits and everything out

of your vegetable gardens?

R.N.: Well, we uh..we didn't..we set traps and had dogs. That's right.

We didn't..I don't remember that ever being a problem. Now today.....deers^{are the} worse thing. But I don't ever remember that being a problem. I really don't.

D.S.: I guess the hound dogs did..

R.N.: Yea. We did..everybody kept a couple dogs. Maybe more than that. And they would scare them off see.

D.S.: Did you have cats?

R.N.: Yep. We always kept cats. Yes siree!

D.S.: Ah. How about when you were there in Old Rag. Was there a lot of visiting going on.

R.N.: That's what ~~we~~^{they} did. That's where progress stepped up so high.. Yes indeed they did. On Sunday's they'd go to peoples houses and have great big dinners and everything. People'd invite..that's the way they lived. That's right. I remember we was..had..a dinner for a certain other Nicholson family..I believe it was John..I can't remember..and then the next Sunday he'd invite us down,to the house and a whole crowd..must have been thirty or forty of us went. You know..different ones of us had sort of a homecoming see.

D.S.: Yea. Great. Wasn't that fun? How did you all sit down at the table?

R.N.: Well we'd set up some other tables. Yea..maybe..uh..some would eat one time some eat another. Way it would work. Maybe older people would eat and kids would stay back see. And they wouldn't dare say a word. That was the way things was them days. You didn't

dare say..I remember one time, I commensed speaking up and I
would would a
caught myself and I know what happened. I got a spanking. I mean it. I
never got but one in my life..that's all I ever got..that
taught me.

D.S.: What did you do to get the spanking?

R.N.: I hit my sister over the head with a little ole dusting thing
one time, and it broke it half into. It wasn't really no big
deal but my sister made such a big noise over it that my daddy
gave me a couple .. switch me a little bit.

(That's my mother there..that's Mrs. Claudia Nicholson.)

Good Morning

Morning. You go..they got me on tape right now..you go on back
in the room. They will talk with you later)

D.S.: She's eighty six years old?

R.N.: Eighty four. Go on back now mama and sit down.She's got a cane
and won't use it.

D.S.: You wouldn't have dared to say that when you were a little boy.

R.N.: Well..I'don't know. We understand each other.

D.S.: Sure. I understand. You have to. Now you have to be the
adult.

R.N.: Yea. I've been that..my daddy's been dead for eighteen years..
and I've been looking after her ever since.

D.S.: Sure. Is there anything else you can think of about Old Rag.
I know you must have had applebutter boilings.

R.N.: Oh yes indeed. I've went to many a one. Plenty of them.

D.S.: Did they do much drinking during those?

R.N.: Yea.

D.S.: They made a party out of it.

R.N.: Yea. Oh yea. I remember one time..I won't tell that til I
get over in the other hollow. I remember one time..can I
tell it now?

D.S.: Sure.

R.N.: Alright when I got over in Neathers Mill in Nichols Hollow,
they had a big applebutter party and they had these three
beautiful girls come out..man you wouldn't think..they was just
pretty as they could be..and Mr. ^{SISK}~~Cyst~~..uh what was..Cyst was

D.S.: Charlie ^{SISK}~~Cyst~~?

R.N.: Yes it was him, but it was Charlie ^{SISK}~~Cyst~~ and

D.S.: ^{PERRY SISK}~~Harry Cyst~~..

R.N.: Yea. It was. and they had some girls and the old people ^{laid down} left
us a stirring the butter..stirred it all night..burnt the stuff
up and didn't have nothing. Wasn't nothing left. We didn't
want to leave. That's the truth now.

D.S.: How old were you?

R.N.: I wasn't very old. I just went to see what was going on. There
was a lot of young people there older than I was. They was off
the Hazel..off the Nichols Hollow..then go to the right and you
go on the Hazel see. I been all up in that Nichols Hollow clean
to the drive when they were building the drive. Walked across
there when there wasn't nothing but uh the dirt *and rocks*
and pulled my shoes off and walked backwards across there. See.
When they was building the Skyline Drive.

D.S.: Sure. Right.

R.N.: And I was anxious. I went..see I went up in Nichols Hollow to

the church. And I asked my mother and she let me go. I don't know why she did..I wouldn't let..do that myself now..let me go..but another per..boy went with me. I can't think who it is. We..two of us..We walked clean over to Pollucks Camp.. and come back down by Old Rag and some of them said we walked twenty one miles that..from 11:00..that was in summertime..til dark. We walked a good twenty one miles. That was what they said. ~~That~~ was a right good ways.

D.S.: Did you ever do anything there at Pollucks.

R.N.: Mam?

D.S.: Did you ever have any fun there at Pollucks.

R.N.: I went to a shindig there on the Fourth of July one time.

With a bunch of people we all went up there. And I was just.. well I reckon I wasn't much over ten years old..

Very very young. Yea I've

seen a lot of people there. A lot of cars. You know the old cars come up through there. And they had big dances there. And there came up the awfulest storm that night and sleet. And I didn't have nothing on ~~that night~~ ^{me} but just a short sleeve shirt.

And we had to walk home that night..bout to freeze to death.The...

all of us. Sleet on the ground on the Fourth of July two inches

One of the awfulest
deep. That's no lie. Right on that peak. Then it turned into a sleet and hail. I never will forget that. That was back in...

I'd say in the late 20's I guess. Boy I mean that was something.

D.S.: Oh my gosh. Yea. Uh, he had fireworks on the fourth didn't he?

R.N.: Oh yea. I've seen that. I've seen him. He usta demonstrate with rattlesnakes and stuff. He was the one that actually got the Park going.....

Pollock did.

D.S.: Sure.

R.N.: Sure he was the one that started it all.

D.S.: Did you ever sell anything up there?

R.N.: No, I uh, was different..my uncles and all would sell..you know what he would do? He'd catch rattlesnakes, skin them and sell the hides and they'd tan them and make belts out of them. He done a lot of them.

D.S.: Who? Who was your uncle?

R.N.: *Lester* Finchum. Lives over above Syria. Up on the left there. He's still a living. He lives there. He's done a lot of...He's kinda of a mountaineer. He's growed up in the mountains; and, he'd uh pick huckleberries. He'd pick more of them than anybody I....I went with him one time...back on the Old Rag Mountain. I was scared to death. Fraid I would get bit by a snake and snakes never did bite him. I don't know he waan't scared of them. But...

D.S.: Uhhuh, yea. But he knew how to handle them.

R.N.: Yea, he was. He knew. I've seen him ^{SNARE} ~~stare~~ them...I've seen him have them there at the place we lived in at the Neathers ^{SNARE} ~~stare~~ at the snakes; and, he'd bring them there alive. Tie them to a tree. Kill them...skin them...and uh sell them.. I don't believe he got more than three or four dollars a piece for them snakes..rattlesnakes..they was a good long one..Big long one he'd sell for...that was a whole lot of money then.

D.S.: Sure. Right. Gee. Did you ever make any..like blackberry
Wine...or anything of that kind?

R.N.: I..well..uh..I never did. I was to young for it. But I
just..practically..they made blackberry wine and they made
a lot of whiskey^{now} to be no frank about. That's just the way
they made their living. They taken that money and people out
of D.C. and all around they'd come at night and get the
whiskey and they'd take it away. They...you know cars them
days had a lot of spare tires on them..they'd put them..it
was illegal see...they'd put the whiskey in the spare tire.
In the bottle see. In other words .. that was the truth. I
know that to be the truth. I know it! I've heard it so many
times I know it to ~~be more than a lie~~ *nobody was lying*. I've heard it. I
didn't see it, but I've heard it. And I know it to be pretty
near the truth.

D.S.: Well they made good pure..

R.N.: Yea they did. It was real good grain whiskey see; and apple
brandy and stuff like that see.

D.S.: It was really pure. Do you know how much they got for it?

R.N.: Well a pretty good price for it according to then. I'd say
\$2 a gallon. I don't know..I'd just say..about that. And
that was good for the time then. See. I believe that's about
what they got.

D.S.: Did they have any particular way of letting the people like
of Washington D.C. know that they^{had} some..?

R.N.: Oh yea....I don't know how it was; but, they had a connection

some way or other. You know it was illegal to do it then, see.

D.S.: Yea, right.

R.N.: You know my uh..my mother's daddy..he, uh had a stillare
right there at that place, cause he made it legal..later
on he got to where he made legal whiskey see..in other
words he had stamps on it and everything. But you know some
of them got a doing...You know you had to pay so much for
the stamps. And some of them was a sneaking it out..it was
a racket either way..still was a racket you see. That was
the way it was did. Ed Weakley he had a big stillare ^{there} too.
Right down..just a quarter a mile right below there. He
made it. I reckon he was the biggest ^{stiller} dealer in Madison County.

D.S.: Was his legal or not?

R.N.: Yea.

D.S.: His was legal.

R.N.: Yea. My granddaddy's was legal, but I reckon some of them around
there would buy so many stamps..they'd buy stamp for one gallon
sneak the other out..and sell two...see. That was the way it
was done.

D.S.: Sure. That makes sense.

R.N.: Well, that's what they did

D.S.: Did you ever know George Corbin?

R.N.: Yea. George Washington. George Washington Corbin was that his
name?

D.S.: Uhhum.

R.N.: Usta make baskets.

D.S.: Huhuh.

R.N.: No. Was another corbin?

D.S.: It was another Corbin. He lived in Nicholson Hollow.

R.N.: Yea. I know him too. I remember him. There was another
Corbin too. There was one named George Washington and I
thought you was think^{ing} about him. He made baskets up in Corbin Hollow
and come out of. Yea I know thatguy now. Yea.

D.S.: He died.

R.N.: Did he?

D.S.: Uhhum. Just a year ago. He was a great man.

R.N.: Yea. I remember him.

D.S.: Yea. Um..alright now..there in Nicholson Hollow which is
considered by many to be the most colorful, widely hollow
ever..did you find life style different from what is was in
Old Rag?

R.N.: Yea, it was..don't know..it was different..was a whole lot
of difference don't know what it was..I don't..not because
me~~t~~ being a Nicholson..nothing likethat..nothing like this
ever come around..but it was a difference...different style..
yea..the people were more^{well, I'd say} honest and I ain't that kind that
runs the others down .. but they were honest and you could
depend on what they said and they was hard workers and a lot
of them was church goers and they still made booze. Now
that's the way the score was. They had to do something like
that to survive. Now I don't think its a great big sin my
self.

D.S.: Sure, Right. I don't think it was either. Made a lot of
fun for a lot of people. Did you ever know of anyone getting

too high? So that they got into bad fights or anything?

R.N.: Yea. They uh..I don't know of..I couldn't call the names
but I know they'd get loaded and they'd get in fights. That
happens ever time.

D.S.: Sure. That's ~~Natural~~..that happens.

R.N.: They told me..this is ^{KIND} sort of off the record but said back
before that time when they go down to Neathers..they'd always
have a fist fight ^{on Saturdays} and ~~want to stab you~~..just a friendly fist
fight..kinda like a boxing match .. they'd have one ever ^{Saturday} day..
Yea, you know get a gang on one side and a gang on the other..
make the thing kinda half way legal..wouldn't use no weapons..
they'd see who was the best man. That's right. I've heard of
that, now..I've heard of that. And I know it's pretty near
the truth.

D.S.: Yea. Was your dad a stone mason?

R.N.: Well, yea he could..all of us ^{Nicholson} could do something with stone.

Yea, he built..after he come over here he worked with U.S.
Calvery..^{Remount} over here..before they went..before
they closed up and he put all that stone fence..
stone fence up through there. Yea..he was..like ^{building} the walls on
the Skyline Drive. You seen them stone walls..a lot of them
Nicholson's built them.

D.S.: That's right.

R.N.: That's right. They paid the biggest part in that section than
anybody else could. Now this ^{SISK} Gyst guy..Charlie ^{SISK} .. You ever heard
of Charlie ^{SISK} Gyst? Well he got in some trouble
or something and he pulled right much time but he was a good

something

D.S.: He hit somebody over the head with a rock.

R.N.: Something like that..I forgot what it was..

D.S.: They were doing a rock lifting. Testing strength in rock lifting and somebody beat him. Yea, he was a nice fellow. He is still. He is still alive. Yea. Um. He was considered one of the best.

R.N.: Yea. You know this book about Pollock something about Shenandoah National Park. We had it here once..showed pictures of him something about some buildings he put up and all. He had no education..he could put up most any kind of a building. Didn't..it was gifted to him.

D.S.: Sure. ^{SISKs} ~~Cyst~~'s, Dodson's, and Nicholson's lived in the hollow. Who else?

R.N.: It was uh..that hollow it was uh Woodward . Yea and he had three or four boys..one named Yank...I forgot them all
.....I'm so young, ^{see} but I can remember that much of it. I remember I used to go out to the house see, and I remember I used to go out Nicholson Holbw..I used..it was called a deep hole..it was a hole *af* water fountain and it come out and shot out of these rock..it was a solid rock and we'd always go up there swimming..us boys. We'd go way up .. oh three or four miles and go swimming. That was a great recr...just like people going to the pool here. Walk up there...

D.S.: COLD!!!!

R.N.: Oh man..it would freeze you..a little bit of it...and you was

out. You had to come out of there. It was cold enough to drink.

D.S.: Right. Yea it was drinkable. All the water was very pure wasn't it.

R.N.: Yea it was. Pure, yea..purest water over in there ever was.

D.S.: Right. Um, how about school when you got there in Nicholson Hollow?

R.N.: Well I went to Neathers Mill School and then I went to *Ellen* later on..that was the last, and then I went to Winchester. We stayed see...we went over to Winchester and stayed a couple years and then we come back here when park commenced to getting this place. See.

D.S.: Yea. That was in '34.

R.N.: Yea. that's about right. Middle of '34. Yea. Right in the middle thirty's.

D.S.: Yea. Well what was your reaction when you'd see tourists.

R.N.: Well it was a great excitement to me. We'd uh..I remember my grand..^Mama's daddy was a guide and and these people come and parked in his place right there at the Neather's Mill and they had all these 20 Model cars..and that was most exciting when I was a little biddy kid. Put a little cap on me and walk around looking at these cars...and he was a guide. He'd go right with them up on the Old Rag Mountain. Right on the tip top. And he was a guide.

D.S.: Uhhum. In other words they didn't scare you?

R.N.: No indeed. No way. They'd give you..know what they'd do. They'd give you a little money you know. Yea. They was good people.

Everybody. No scare to it. They..I don't know some people might scare but I can see your point..you think we never had seen..they didn't scare us a bit. We was right at home. In my point of view.

D.S.: The reason I ask that is people say that you all ran and hid.

R.N.: Oh, that's a bunch of bull. That's it and I got it right.

D.S.: Right. *They can see*

R.N.: I can see your point. They have told that. I know a lot of people would tell that because didn't you know..they wasn't.. well some people's got more intelligence than others and uh, I think the Nicholson's...and our group of Nicholson's about the smartest there was. Now I'll have to say that.

D.S.: Right and your^{self} entitled to see it.

Do you know of any signals that were used when the revenue men came in?

R.N.: Oh..well I don't know..yea they would tell each other and if they could uh..and uh they'd tip them off if they needed tipping. Different ones...And they..sometimes they'd get a working against each other you know..they'd kinda get a *fued*..between each other see and they'd turn each other in see.It might not be..I don't recall another Nicholson turning someone in but other people a few other names up in that hollow..in Nicholson Hollow it was a few more besides Nicholson's see. I remember a big still..I remember this when I was right there at Neather's Mill..the revenue men went up in there and they come back with these copper kettles .. they'd chop them up with axes *and holes in them* and they come off the Hazel..they went off..see you go up the

Nicholson's Hollow and turn right and you go on the Hazel and they cut up one of the biggest stilbs .. they said there was 11 *hagsheads*. Great big ones of mash ready to run off. And somebody turned them in and they darted off. Yea, that's right. That's uh, that's pretty near..that's uh..I'd swear to that.)

I was just eleven years old..I guess..

no more than that..when we moved over to Neathers see. And I seen them come out..they was walking..whole line of people..one behind the other and they caught them..caught some of them..and I don't know what they got..I don't remember that.

D.S.: You know that makes sense then..that you would kill somebody that turned you in...

R.N.: Yea..that's a powerful lot...cause a lot..well uh, some of them got killed over in there. You don't know how they got shot..you know at nights and stuff over in the Hazel .. all down through there. Now that's uh..that's *top of mountain* down to the right see and they..well they were rugged right along..they were pretty mean right through there.

D.S.: Yea. Right. Oh gosh...Um, now..did your mother know any herbs? You know like when you got sick..what would she do if you got a cold?

R.N.: Well, a mustard plaster. You take mustard someway and boil it get it hot..and put it on a hot towel. You wrap it around your chest .. I know that. I knowed another thing..you gotta sore mouth..you take cinnamon bark and boil it and you can't beat. *st* I've used that not too long ago .. I had a sore mouth..better than anything you can get.

D.S.: You mean a sore throat?

R.N.: Yes sir. If you've got a sore throat...and my daddy usta use
it all the time. Take cinnamon bark

D.S.: Cinnamon bark.

R.N.: *Sumner* trees and got ~~on it~~. Grows in the mountain.
You've heard of *Sumner* trees.?

D.S.: *Sumack*?

R.N.: *Sumner trees*

You ain't never heard of that have you? Alright there's
plenty of them. There's one right out here. They grow in
the mountian. They use them. And same thing..they u h..
they take that and make medicine out of it. Lot of people
hunted that and sold it in them days.

D.S.: Yea. Did you ever do that?

R.N.: No, I never did. I was too young at ~~time~~ see. But I've
seen plenty of it..my uncles and different ones git it see.
And they done a lot of coon hunting too. And tracking; and so
many..uh..so many..so many ways to make a living. Wasn't no-
body really worried about starving to death at that time. They
didn't think about it see. Stop to think about it now, you don't
know how you made it see.

D.S.: How about peeling bark. Did they peel bark?

R.N.: Yes indeedy. Plenty of it. I remember one time..uh..when we
moved to Neathers I had to go up on the old..my mother's dad-
dy had land in the park see. And we had to go right up against
the Old Rag see *we wanted* a bunch of old posts and it was so
cold and I was a youngster and I had to ~~pull~~ *use* cross cut saw for
my daddy and we cut a lot of posts and sold them. In the win-

tertime be so cold..you know how a kid is..he can't..a grown up can stand more ..uh something like work .. we done right much of that. Cutting posts, peeling bark, digging out logs,

D.S.: Where would you sell the bark?

R.N.: Well there was..uh..I think it went to Luray Tannery.

It was somebody picked it up in a truck. That's...a uh old model truck come to get it. We'd have to get it down to the main road see. And they'd pick it up and carry..I don't know if they carried it to Culpeper or Luray. There was a place in Luray that bought it one time but they used it for tanning leather and stuff at one time see.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Right..as you say there was a lot of ways of making money?

R.N.: They used to..they tell me..years ago..they used to go up Nicholson Hollow with a wagon .. now I walked that road when I went up there..I been up it twice when I was a kid and it was an old road I went by and they said they usta haul bark over that mountain with a wagon and said it was so steep going down the other side the guys could..my granddaddy's told me a many time..you could look back..^{underneath}you'd be riding a mule.. had three mules see..and he could look back under the axil of the wagon going there and they put chains there around the wheels to keep it from going..lock all four wheels and drag it down til you get it down on a flat see.

D.S.: Oh my gosh.

R.N.: That's the way them old timers did. That's before my time...I'm

telling you what my granddaddy told me.

D.S.: Yea. Right. Oh my Lord. You know they had to have a lot of strength. Didn't they?

R.N.: Oh yea..they were strong people. My daddy was a strong man and my granddaddy, Trent Nicholson, was the strongest man..I reckon in the Madison County. He was a regular giant. They tell me..know I remember him right much..he was a raw bone..big man..and I mean he could..they told one time that he a guy had two mules to a wagon and he got stalled in the mud. He was always a show off and said well I'll just push that out.. and said he got his back up a gin it and said he just actually pushed the wagon right on out..mules and all. Said he..anybody knowed that man said he was the strongest man in that community..Trent Nicholson.

D.S.: Trent?

R.N.: And that's my granddaddy. And he was a strong man.

D.S.: How tall was he?

R.N.: Ah, he was better than six foot and he was raw bone and he was a regular giant..He was a terrible big man.. a good father.. but he was a big strong man.

D.S.: Yea. Right.

R.N.: He made shingles, rails and hewed out logs and that's what.. he was kinda..kinda ..he never made no whiskey. I just talked to my mother yesterday about it and he never..he didn't believe in that..he made his the other way see. He made his selling shingles and..wood shingles..see that goes on houses and cutting logs out to make houses with and everything. I can remember one time..

we went by this place, and all these shavings he had a regular place where he could draw these shingles out, a drawing knife and everything like that..he had like a shop see and he'd rack these shingles..great big.. must have been a half acre of shingles racked up..they were curing out see. And he'd sell them to people come around. Done a good business at it..according to the time. See. See wasn't nothing but shingle and a little wood. They taken chestnut trees and saw them up so long and then they split them and then he'd dress them down...to a feather edge..see. Big end be down at the bottom and be a feather edge to it. Thin on one end..thicker on the other and lay one right over top the other. And you..and they made those rooves real steep like that and you can look at them but they never would leak. You could look at the attic and they never would leak/ Water would run right on off. And they would last for years and years..that chestnut wood especially. See that chestnut died out..that blight got in that bout in the..

D.S.: Twenties.

R.N.: Twenties. That's right. Prettiest timber. See we had a..my mother's daddy had a .. at Neather's Mill,had a Chestnut orchard. Them great big trees..I remember when they was dying out. I remember that stuff..I could pick up a basket full and get the best ones you ever ate..Ain't like these ones you go out here and buy in the store, now.

D.S.: That's right. Yea. The American Chestnut. Now we're getting foreign chestnuts. When youpicked the chestnuts did you ever take them to the store?

R.N.: Yea, they sold them. That's the way, uh, on my mother's side I think they sold them at the stores then, but you know you never got a whole bunch for them. And another thing, they'd sell them..I don't know if you ever heard of this..you sell stuff like that and you trade ^{it out} like. And if you didn't get it all out they'd give you a 'due bill'. You heard of that?

D.S.: Uhhum.

R.N.: Alright. I didn't know if you'd heard it.

D.S.: Oh yea.

R.N.: Alright, that's the way they did. It was kinda..to me..~~that~~ ^{today} wasn't fair. To me, today. Do you think it would be. Now, they should have give you money back. It's more liberal now and everything. By a long ways but I mean it was kinda..~~they'd~~ kinda block you and make you come back and buy off the same person

D.S.: Oh yea, that's true. That did make you have...

R.N.: I mean I can see your point now, but ~~again~~ ^{then} I don't, but I see it now .. I'd .. then we wasn't quite equal then were we?

D.S.: Well, you got me...you were still able to...

Did you raise any sheep?

R.N.: Nah, we..that's the one thing we never..you never seen no sheep around there. Hogs and cows. Wasn't nothing..^{but cattle.}

See right in around in the park and right at the edge of the park line and uh..on down farther in the country you don't want to hear that I know..they did have big cattle in the valley, see. In other words we living right in the park was uh..kinda a grind to make a living it seems that way to me now. But then I didn't

pay any attention to it and I don't think my mother or father..
or none of them..they lived to good..they lived all right.

D.S.: You lived fine because you had plenty to eat
and everything..

R.N.: We had good vitamins..proteins in the food..wasn't no stuff
no stuff put in it to..and we raised all our hog meat. Canned
blackberries. Anykind of a berry wouldn't go to waste if you
could get to it. And I know peaches..anything..my daddy..
granddaddy on the Finchum side had a beautiful peach orchard,
and people would..let me tell you something. It was way back
up on this mountain and he wasn't bothered. It was strings of
people would come over out of Page County and they'd get their
peaches..help themselves to them..and go on you know..never
would get a nickle out of them. I've seen them do it. He was
afraid to say anything to them. And that was the way it was.
I've seen them do it right in broad daylight. And I was a tiny
kid. Cause..it was before the fire burned over the Old Rag
Mountain in the Depression..1930..before that. I remember when
the fire burned over that whole thing..it lit up the whole works
and burnt for a week or two.

D.S.: Really? Old Rag?

R.N.: Yea, burnt the Old Rag clean off. I could live down at Neather's
Mill and look right at it. The timber was a cracking. It burnt
it just clean as could be.

D.S.: Wonder what started it?

R.N.: Some litter bug started it..Corbins lived up there they say done
it. Couple Corbin guys..but I don't remember the first names, but
they got them..I think they had to pull some...

D.S.: Then it burned the post office and the store?

R.N.: It burnt the whole.....whole works up in there. Went over in Page County and everywhere. It burnt that whole thing off.

D.S.: Is that when Skyland burned too?

R.N.: Yea, it must have been. That was a big fire..that was the only one..they've had some fires over there..different times..but that was the main one. That was just kinda like a big...I believe it was in 1930 if I don't..I believe..wasn't the drought year. It was right close to it. I don't remember..but I remember burning it off. I remember it could light up the whole..

D.S.: And it lasted for a week?

R.N.: Yea, ever bit of it. Yea it just kept a..I went fishing with my uncle..that's my mother's Uncle George. We went a fishing up in Corbin Hollow and we caught trouts and we was right up at the park..the smoke was going the other way and it was done burning down ^{close to} at the creek you know and we caught so many trouts that day. Don't know why we did but we did. We caught a whole bunch..bet we caught twenty five or thirty. Real pretty trout..rainbow trout..that long.

We always thought maybe the fire was making them bite. They just bite like crazy. I...uh..

D.S.: Hum. Yes indeed that is something. Do you know of anybody..did you ever see them starting fires deliberately? So they would be sure of huckleberries?

R.N.: No indeed. I don't know of anything like that. It wasn't too many fire bugs around.

D.S.: Well this was to..just to assure of huckleberries...crops.

R.N.: No I don't know nothing about that. That's the first I've heard of that.

D.S.: Oh really!

R.N.: Mighta been..but, uh...uh...no I don't know nothing about that.

D.S.: Yea. Did you ever know of anybody rocking a house?
Or, People?

R.N.: No, I ain't never heard of that. No. If I woulda ever heard of it, I would tell it. I don't. No, not where we lived.

D.S.: Yea. Okey. How about long fingers. Did you have anybody around with long fingers?

R.N.: No. No sir..you could leave stuff around..wasn't bad. Ain't
right today
near as bad..it's worser now, than it was then.

D.S.: Alright. In other words you really didn't have...

R.N.: We had a..uh, uh..them people was pretty nice people. They was the best..I'll say that. At that time..they was good honest, Christian..a lot of them was pretty good Christian people. And so that was something you didn't have to worry about. The only time that I remember anything..when we lived..getting back to the Old Rag.. Mama..uh, there was another Nicholson..Mama ordered me something and the mailman put it in the wrong mailbox. And they kinda..that was the only bunch I know would do anything like that and they kept the stuff and wouldn't never..course mama had ordered it from one of them mail order houses. That's the only thing I ever knowed. And they was kinda low like bunch. I can say that. They were Nicholson, but they weren't no kin to me. That's right. There were a lot of Nicholson's but they wasn't

kin. You wouldn't think that. But you'd think all of them was kin, but they wasn't. There was different..I would say in Nicholson Hollow there was eight or ten..oh, I'd say there was twenty different families that wasn't no kin. There was a whole lot people lived up there. I know it was twenty or thirty families..maybe more than that..I don't..just been so long,

D.S.: Uhhum, yea. If you stopped in visiting the families..say alright let's go visit so and so today and you went there and they were busy like shelling peas, or busy doing something.. did they stop work? Or did you all help.

R.N.: Well, they..uh..I'd say we all helped. Kinda got in there. We didn't exactly stop the work. Kinda got in..kinda made it a family affair. I think that's the way it was. They didn't.. uh..give you the hush hush to go on. They was friendly..everyone was friendly and glad to see you. That's the way it worked.

D.S.: Sure. Uh, did you have corn shuckings?

R.N.: Yes indeed. Yea, I went to them. Man that's when you had the good time. Get on the bottle you know. *I don't remember* never had no fights at one, but I remember several of them I been to. That was over in Old Rag now. I remember that.

D.S.: Now at the corn shuckings. You say they had the bottle. Did they put the bottle underneath the corn so you all worked real fast to get to the bottle or was it so when you got the red ear.

R.N.: No I don't think that was so. I really don't.

D.S.: You just drank?

R.N.: That's right. I don't think that was so. Somebody might have told you that. That wasn't so with us. Everbody was out there.. as I said..uh, everybody pitched in and did their part. In other words..they didn't..in otherwords, they..I reckon..uh..no, no, it wasn't that way.

D.S.: Uhhuh. It was just sort of a fun time. Everybody joined in..

R.N.: Yea, they'd build a fire out of something. Have sort of a bonfire..back with the shucks and everything..maybe throw some of the shucks on there and burn them up while they were at it. See. I remember that.

D.S.: Were there any dances or anything of that..?

R.N.: Oh yea. They had dances in peoples homes. Yes indeed. Plenty of them.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Square dances?

R.N.: Yes indeed.

D.S.: With fiddlers?

R.N.: Yea, with old time fiddlers. Some of them fall out of the upstairs. One time one guy..well it wasn't exactly upstairs. One guy built close up on a hill and one guy fell on the porch about ten foot out in the yard. He got high. Oh yes there was plenty of that. Yea, that's the way the recreation was. Oh they had dances all the time. Yes indeedy. See you couldn't go nowhere. Wasn't..they didn't know nothing else.

D.S.: Yea. So that was your chance to play.

R.N.: Yea.

D.S.: Oh great. Do you recall any of the tunes they would play?

R.N.: Oh..I..let's see ~~know~~. I don't know..I know the tunes but I

can't name them.

D.S.: Turkey in the Straw?

R.N.: Yea, I know that and there was..

D.S.: Sally Will You Marry Me.

R.N.: Yea, but there was another one I was trying to think. Something like bear went over the mountain. But I don't know what that was. Played most of them I guess you know.

D.S.: Two Cent Gal.

R.N.: Yea. It was uh, I'll tell you something else. It was a fellow..

Charlie Butler that uh..talking about the other store in the Old

Rag..well he was fiddler . Let me tell you what they did. This is the truth now.

when they taken the park over one time..they played..they was in-

vited down to the White House. They played for Roosevelt. But you

know what happened. They was so sorry wasn't..they thought they

all got messed up and they turned them off on the radio. They was

on the radio at that time. We listened at it..that's the truth

too. They went down there. They was playing for Mrs. Roosevelt.

Now, that's the way it was. Charlie Butler and ^{he had a gang} he played for dances.

Well, uh, in other words they kinda got all messed up and had a

little time on the radio see and they cut them off cause I was

listening right at it.

D.S.: Wonder why they turned them off.

R.N.: Oh, I don't know. They got all messed up. Got out of tune..got excited I think. Yea..they kinda got..

D.S.: Well of course they got excited. Sure. Yea.

R.N.: That was about the time you know all that thing was starting with the park and everything.

D.S.: Did you ever go into Corbin Hollow excepting to go fishing?

R.N.: Yes indeedy.

D.S.: Uh, what were the people there like?

R.N.: Well they were uh..I'll tell you the kinda people they were..

they were..uh..I don't..they were pretty hard workers. They could make baskets..the beautifulest baskets you ever seen and all..you see you can go up Corbin Hollow and you can turn on Old Rag and you turn on this Other Hollow and you come up on Stony Man see. Well they done basket work and they *cut* white oak splits and soaked them in the water and they could bind them..they take berries..berries out of the mountain and dye them and make the prettiest baskets..clothes baskets.. half bushel ones, bushel and everything like that.

D.S.: did they have a different dialogue.

R.N.: Yea. They were uh..no harm in them. Wasn't a bit of harm in them.

D.S.: Did they talk differently from what we do?

R.N.: Yea. Yes sir..I hate..they wasn't as up to date..they wasn't as bright as the other..they kinda..but they could do that. Now kinda understand. And you know there was one of them..uh..Corbin guys.....shot a guy.... kept fooling with him and he shot aman and killed him right out of a little ole hole..a gable in the house. And he come down to Wesley Jenkins store and gave himself up. And they didn't even..they had a little trial and they just *cleared him*, cause they was treating the man dirty. I can't think of the man's name now..

D.S.: *Sennel*

R.N.: *Sennel*, that's right *Sennel* Corbin.

Me and mama

And he..do you know who he killed. I was trying to think?

D.S.: It was a Dodson.

R.N.: Yes sir. She said it was a Dodson. Yes sir. He just kept picking on the old man.

D.S.: They were trying to get one of his girls.

R.N.: Yea. that's the way..yea. They was trying to but I think at the time he did it they had it in for him and I think he kinda blocked it or something and they went there that night to do something with him see. Now that's..so when the trial come up, they never had hardly no trial..just wasn't much use.

D.S.: Yea. Right. Well he was justified.

R.N.: Oh, mama was telling me..he come down to..uh, that's the first store, Neathers Mill Store and then Wesley Jenkins Store a little closer to us see. And he come down and laid on the porch the rest of the night, and gave himself up and told what he'd done and they just had a little *Trial* and what so on and told him to go on home.

D.S.: Uhhum, yea. Um, did you ever hear that the Jenkins Store sort of robbed people?

R.N.: Yea. they were..now the Neather's Mill Store kept nothing, he was honest. But the Jenkins store, they, they always *Robve it*.

D.S.: He'd put his hand on the scales

R.N.: Yea. They was the one doing the 'due bill'. Make you buy something and put off stuff on you. We did most of ours..what little we did down..go on to the other store. Go on and buy see.

D.S.: Sure. I would too. I heard that people that wanted to buy a

pound of something were lucky if they got a half pound.

R.N.: That's right. Well I tell you..uh, well..Wesley..I won't get in no trouble telling will I?

D.S.: No.

R.N.: Well they..he's dead anyway..but anyway he taken them baskets off Corbins and they didn't get nothing out off it. They'd take them baskets and sell them or ship them and sell them to people from out in the city and get tremendous prices.

D.S.: He gave them 35¢.

R.N.: Well some of them didn't get that much. 10¢. Ten cents a many a time. And I seen them pile them all together..one man ^{looked like} could ^{a turtle} carry a whole bunch of them just way up in the air you know.. coming down the road and that poor ole..that George Washington ..you heard of George Washington Corbin..he would..that's another Corbin now..I mentioned a while ago, he would uh..they would carry the awfulest loads on their back. I don't see how in the world they carried it..they tell me they could carry them clean from Wesley's store..they dealt there...the Corbins did. And they carried all that clean back up in those mountains. Say they never would lay it down. I've seen them go by the house with meal, and groceries and everything.

D.S.: Um. Was the store a good place to get news?

R.N.: Oh, yea it was the gossip place.

D.S.: Then why did you object to having to go down with the mule to get the corn.?

R.N.: Well I didn't like to ride the mule..I was sort of ashamed. I was sort of high strung. That was it. You know there's a little pride

in somebody's..you know I kinda got a little pride myself. This bunch of Nicholson's got a right smart pride. And we wanted to get out and do better. That's right. And we have did a whole lot better. So fooling.

D.S.: Sure. And so you were ashamed to ride a mule?

R.N.: I don't know..I was then.

D.S.: I'd like to ride a mule.

I don't know..

R.N.: Yea I was ashamed of it. People then kinda whistle at you, you know; and they would make fun of you see. See there he's riding a mule going to you know..that's the way everybody knowed everybody's business see. It was the way it was then. That's the way I felt about it and that's the..I tell you the truth about it.

D.S.: Well did you ever hang around the store to talk with people?

R.N.: Yea. My mother and father would let me. I'd hang around there some. But, you know..not too late.

D.S.: Yea. After all you had chores to do.

R.N.: Yea. I had chores and I had..you know

D.S.: What were...

R.N.: Didn't have chores, I had a certain bunch of people I hung out with and I better not hang out with the rest of them see. You know it was kinda..Now see when you got down to the store you was mixing up with Nicholson's, and everything see.

D.S.: Yea. What were your particular chores? Now would you get up early in the morning?

R.N.: Oh yea. Well get up..drive the old cows up and mama would go out and milk them..mama or daddy..and get my wood in and uh, most of it was outside stuff. Didn't have to do much inside

stuff like that.

D.S.: Uhhuh. Were you up at daylight?

R.N.: Yes indeed. We...always early birds.

D.S.: Yea, uhhuh. And did you allow your cows^{or} hogs to run loose?

R.N.: No. they run on our own property.

D.S.: You had it all fenced in then?

R.N.: Rail fences.

D.S.: How much did you have, in the way of land?

R.N.: I uh, I uh...there was a whole lot of land in there. I don't know..a couple hundred acres I guess. You know it just..I kindly..I don't know. Just in up them mountains. We put corn out up in them hollows. Made some beautiful..nice corn..big ears of corn...and everything...I'd say a couple hundred acres. I'm just guessing at it, now. It'd have to be a whole lot.

D.S.: Uhhum.

R.N.: You know if you go up the side of a mountain..and..them mountains soon count up in acres. See.

D.S.: Sure. Right. And did you have your own apple orchard?

R.N.: Yep. Not me..my daddy now.

D.S.: Well that's what I mean.

R.N.: Yes indeed. Yes indeed. Had plenty of apples. Prettiest kind..we sold a lot of them too. Fall of the year you know..put them in barrels and export them. Different places see.

D.S.: And you dried them?

R.N.: Yea. Oh yea. We had a sweet^{new} apple tree that was...you could make an apple dumpling out of it. Now, but we only had one of them. That was over on the Old Rag now. Man..that..everyone

wanted them apples. It made the best..you could dry them when when you made the apple dumpling and you could make up a brown dough. Put them in the stove and bake them. Man you talk about something good. My mother could do that good. It was a special apple though..it was a sweet apple. Just as sweet as honey. Called a sweet ^{when} apple. Never seen no more of them. That was the last one I've ^{ever} seen. And they dried beans..they canned everything that was canable. Like cherries, apples, and anything that come along.

D.S.: Did your mother have flower gardens?

R.N.: Yea..always..everybody had flowers..flower pots everywhere you went. Now I think most everybody did. Yes indeed.

D.S.: Yea. Did they have boxwood?

R.N.: Yes indeed. That old place over in the Old Rag was all you could smell was boxwood a half mile away. I ain't fooling you.. Yes indeedy.

D.S.: So many times you go walking along and you'll see a lilac growing.

R.N.: Yea they were planted..

D.S.: Somebody planted that. Yea. So the women did like their flowers?

R.N.: Oh yes, they did.

D.S.: Uhhum. Was your furniture hand made.

R.N.: Um yes. I, we..I got..yes most of it was hand made. A *yellow*, *Sillard* made ~~lot~~ lot of it over at Neathers Mill..could make the beautifulest ever was. That was right. And a lot of..Grandpap Trent...a lot of his was handmade. Most..I'd say it was all hand made. Made by local around in the county. I got an old safe right here now was handmade. Got it right today. But I got to do it up. It's

got the metal grill in it..put a star in it..crunch these little holes in it. And it's made out of yellow poplin. But I'm gonna clean it up..I'm gonna bring it back to natural wood. Somebody painted it..put I'm gonna..a guy offered me right much for it.See. And it's real old. It's my granddaddy..Grandpap Trent had it.

D.S.: By the way did he have a beard?

R.N.: No. You would think he did. The difference..they kinda went slick then..they ain't never..they did...they didn't have much of a beard. They shaved it off. No indeed..wait a minute..yea he did...he had a mustache..that's right..he had a mustache right up here..My granddaddy on my mother's side grew a mustache..a real pretty good size one..on out..you know..bout like that.

looked right good. That's what they wore. But they'd just like trim it..man they'd trim it twice a week. They'd get it trimmed. You know right to a line. That's right. I remember that.

D.S.: Yea. Uhhuh. The clothes that you had..you bought those or did your mother make them?

R.N.: Uh, why, uh..I remember my mother made my overhauls..buy material and make overhauls when I was a kid. Bib overhauls..and made the shirts. When I was a kid until later on..started buying them see.

D.S.: Sure, right. Did you on your shoes have those metal things?

R.N.: Yea. uh, heal plates and toe plates. Yea. It was a fellow..me and mama was talking about it..we knowed you was a coming anyway..was a guy that made them hobnail shoes. He made shoes. Lilliard guy. He made the shoes for all the people around there.

D.S.: Lillard?

R.N.: Uhhum. Old man..Lillard. I don't know if you heard of him..he's

^{on}
~~own~~ back..he's older than my granddaddy..but he made shoes on
up...cause I was talking with a Lillard..he s a friend of mine..
lives in Flint Hill..he lives over there. And we was talking
the other day about his granddaddy making shoes. He made shoes
for everybody round there. And he made..uh..his son..that's
this man's daddy he made..uh..when anybody..he run the funeral
home..it wasn't exactly a funeral home..he just had a shop. When..
my mother said when they'd go up Nicholson Hollow the'd take a
stick..he'd measure the person that was dead..he'd go back that
night build a paper coffin out of yellow poplin, stain it put
the *nuts* and everthing on it and he had it done the
next morning. And he uh he done that work. Get about \$15 or \$20
for it. That's right he done it all. Jim Lillard done it all.

D.S.: Then your father didn't have to do any repairing on your shoes?
You could go down to him and...

R.N.: That's right..well..no that was a little too far back for that.
I uh, uh...think he just bought his shoes. He'd half sole..put
leather soles on them Patches and all. But that was a little too
far back..I was going too far back...for you.

D.S.: Yea. But uh,

R.N.: In other words I was going back..I just happened to mention it..
that's going back about the turn of the century. Little poor *so*
I just happened to bring that in I reckon.

D.S.: So many of the men had *lasts*.

R.N.: Yea we had one of them. We had whatever,..had one for different
size shoes..then we had one with a three cornered thing..had one
a block of wood. And I've half soled shoes myself.

D.S.: You have?

R.N.: When I was a kid, I put half soles on my mother's shoes. I got the right size tack and you have a tack to tack them on with, and you clench the things right on and she wore them. I put half soles right on when I was a kid..I betcha I wasn't more then ten or 12 years old. That's right. I was kinda a genius all the time. I always was. Cause I, when we moved over here, I went on to doing carpentry work. Went over to the ReMount and I started doing it. And I got to be just about as good as most of them see. So I didn't have a whole lot of education but if I seen anything done I could do it the next time. If I ever seen it done. They didn't have to tell me but once.

D.S.: How far did you go through school?

R.N.: Oh I didn't go but to seventh grade, myself. That's as far as I went. Course I made good use of it. Much as possible.

D.S.: You were lucky to have that much education.

R.N.: Yea I was.

D.S.: You really were.

R.N.: See when I moved over to Neathers I got going over ^{to Otlan} there. And that was a different school over there. They had a up to date.. a little up to date school, then , so I got enough to get by. I wish I had more. But I got enough to make out. I'm not really complaining.

D.S.: No. How did you celebrate Christmas?

R.N.: Well that there..they started celebrating Christmas two weeks before it come in. Well that's when they really drink the booze. See. Yea, they'd celebrate then. They'd start at least two weeks

ahead of time. That's right. Say its on the 25th..they'd be two weeks ahead of it.

D.S.: Visiting around.

R.N.: Yea..they'd..in other words..start two weeks and if they done anything around...they might go back bout the middle of January to doing anything. Going back to really work *with some value to it.*

D.S.: It was then just a real fun visiting, eating and drinking..

R.N.: Yes it was..they made Christmas..Christmas to me anymore is just another day. Then seemed like everybody appreciate it. They just got out and they really did.

D.S.: Did you ever get any presents?

R.N.: Yea, oh yea. Oh, uh..I didn't know who Santy Claus was for a long time. That uh..oh, climb out of bed 4:00 in the morning yes indeed..got right many presents..in my stocking..we was lucky...we wasn't as bad off as you thought..I mean as people would think.!

D.S.: What did you get?

R.N.: Oh we got oranges..candy..pistols..cap pistols..and I..whole bunch of stuff.

D.S.: And you shot firecrackers?

R.N.: Yes. Oh yea..I loved them..yea we got firecrackers..roman candles..ones you shoot way out there and blow up you know..

D.S.: Sure, great. Nobody was ever hurt? with them were they?

R.N.: No..uh I don't ever remember anybody ever getting hurt over any stuff like that. No.

D.S.: Uhhuh..Oh so Christmas was fun wasn't it?

R.N.: Yea.

D.S.: Oh Yea..gee. I can see how you can say..well, it doesn't seem like Christmas now. Um..oh let's see. You say you did use Dr. Ross?

R.N.: Ross..yea, uhuh?

D.S.: Would he be used like ~~when~~ people had babies?

R.N.: Yep, oh yea, he done all that.

D.S.: Oh Uhuh..Did you ever make sorghum?

R.N.: Yea. I helped do it many a time when I was living..have to go back over to the Old Rag right down from...Raymond ^{Bunham} ~~Barham~~, my uncle..he's..we made it right there in his front yard. Had the horses going around and squeezing the juice out of this mill and then putting it over in the vat and made it..Yes indeed.. I remember three or four times doing it.

D.S.: Yea.

R.N.: And it was good for you too. It really had a lot of vitamins. That was good for you.

D.S.: Do you..I bet you were the kind that played practical jokes?

R.N.: Um practical jokes....I can't recall anything much over there.

D.S.: You weren't the kind that would do it?

R.N.: Um..I don't know. I don't remember..I don't remember right off.

I know I played some practical ones later on about 18 or 20. But I don't remember anything along then. Playing any practical jokes on anyone..I don't. Oh yea, I do..I'll change my mind. Made me think of it. Well I dressed up one time when I lived at Neather's Mill. And I didn't let mother or nobody know it. There was a whole bunch of people lived around there..four or five families. And I go back up the Corbin road Like going to the Old Rag and

I dressed up..I taken these women's clothes out and I dressed up..I put on these women's clothes..and I went down the road going on down towards Neathers Mill and everybody in the country wanted to know who in the world that lady was. And it wasn't nobody but, ^{me} and that's the only thing I remember doing. ^{She} Wasn't right up close to me and they'd go who was that lady. You know.. it had got there curiosity up.

D.S.: I knew you...like that. Did you ever uh, in the mountains say I hope to be such and such when I grow up or..you didn't think about?

R.N.: I didn't think about it. I just never..I don't reckon..Nah, I never predicted what the future was gonna be. I didn't..we didn't at that time..I mean I didn't say I wanted to do this that..it just come to me. I ..just the way it worked out.

D.S.: Uhhum, yea.

R.N.: What I'm saying is when the park taken that land, it forced others to look for better places to live and work see. More, you know, get out in society and uh, you know, find better jobs.

D.S.: Uhhum. Yea. Right. Can you remember any ghost stories?

R.N.: Oh yea..I can remember..tell you one..I don't know about ghost stories..but I was at a cemetery right there right there at our place...and I would go visit my neighbor at night and I'd run so fast...I could see everything over at that..it was imagination though..you know how a kid..I could see things in the air..run myself to death to get home..now that's the truth. But wasn't nothing but my imagination. That's bout the only..I'd be scared..

I could jump a rail fence..anything. I would I was so scared.

D.S.: You mention those rail fences. Did those really keep hogs in?

R.N.: Oh yea you couldn't beat it. Man they..rail..

D.S.: But there's a space like this..underneath.

R.N.: Oh, you might work another rail in..yea..you have to..see..

some of them. Yes indeedy you could fix them..^arail fence so you could keep a hog in. Yes indeed. But lot of them didn't.. lot of them *for cattle* see. You'd have to chop the rail and let them come close together see. I've seen...see there was two ways to build a ^{rail} fence. You could build it straight line or you could built it zig zag. A straight line they'd usually have them for a hog pen..and everything..that'd bring it close together see. In other words wouldn't have the gap between it. Now out through the mountains and all they'd zig zag them and all and they'd keep the cattle *with space that far between,* ~~in because~~ see.

D.S.: Uhhum. Yea. Then you didn't have to bring them in just before butchering time to fatten them up. They were already fat.

R.N.: No indeed. They were always..the way it was..they know where the little feed was and everything..and they'd come home..see. They'd always do that. That was nature.

D.S.: Yea. Roughly how big an area did the hogs have?

R.N.: Well I tell you..they..uh..uh..they'd roam the whole place to te tell you the truth. But they'd always come back. They wouldn't never leave much..that was the way it was. They'd just roam most anywhere and come on back see. I'll tell you another story..that over in Page County. This was kinda ~~awful~~ *unlawful*..we didn't know no better. In fact when I lived down here..uh, my granddaddy was

still living then and I went with them. I went..they went on a hog hunt one time and the people were turning them out over in Page County. And the hogs..they said they was wild, but they wasn't. They was ^{scars} ~~sires~~ and had a whole bunch of pigs. We had special dogs, we'd grab this...^{seen} ~~sire~~ and hold it and I seen it happen..he'd just put his teeth in the meat and the hog would ~~give~~ right up..he'd catch it. There was a lot of that going.. They was rustling pigs and everything but actually them people in the Page was turning them out in the Blue Ridge Mountains so they could eat acorns and everything and they wandered clean on down in the Madison see....and that was the whole story..I found out later see. That was the whole story about it but at the present time we said they was wild but they really wasn't wild. They shouldn't have let them run all over the country..that was their..uh, I still think we didn't do wrong.

D.S.: Right.

R.N.: They was..heck, they was done ten or fifteen miles out of the way see. I know that. That was another story I was, uh, in on. And I never will forget it.

D.S.: And then they didn't have the hogs notched in any way to know that they were their's.

R.N.: Wasn't no brand on them or nothing. Wasn't no brand.

D.S.: Yea. Did you ever have deep deep snow that covered the fences?

R.N.: Uh..not too bad over there. I don't remember..uh..not too bad. I've seen it worser right here in the last twenty years than it was over there...when my time see. It wasn't right through..I've

see it right here fourty inches deep..one time about twenty years ago. But over there I don't remember..something like that be the deepest..but I've seen it right here on this place when I had cattle here, the daggone..it would be up to the cattle's back. ^{They} Couldn't hardly get through it. So the snow wasn't too bad over there. Wasn't no worser than it was ..

D.S.: So you had no problem with heating your house...

R.N.: No. No. No wasn't too bad. Don't believe..see it didn't drift in the mountains...it didn't do as bad as it did out in the valley. See. It wasn't..wouldn't blow as bad see...

D.S.: Oh gee, can you think of anything else. You are the one that has the knowledge.

R.N.: Well, I don't..that bout..

D.S.: You went to church regularly..every Sunday..

R.N.: Well, I told you..that's was about why..I was just thinking.

There was no where else to go, and my mother would take us to church and actually..uh..I ain't saying that was a lot of recreation to go to the church..wasn't no where else to go and that's where everybody went. I don't know..it wasn't forced..it was just automatic see.

D.S.: Yea.

R.N.: So, she'd take us all the time, and that's what I told you when

I left the church I went up on the Skyline Drive and come
I don't know of a whole lot ^{more}
around that trip that time. / I can't think of a whole lot more

And you know about them making..I told you about them making unlegal whiskey and stuff like that..a lot of them. And that probably about all. But all of them pretty nice people...

D.S.: Ah, they were!

R.N.: We, there weren't..and they wasn't..I'll say one thing fer them.

They was smarter than you think. I'm not lying. Some weren't but some were. But them Nicholson's from up in Nicholson Hollow they was..all of them..I know some of them went to Winchester and made the best stone masons..uh, uh..I know three of them..that went..got to be contractors..biggest contractors around Winchester. Building stone buildings and everything. I know..they come right out of that hollow. Now that's...

D.S.: And you know your hands prove another statement..that all the Nicholson's have beautiful hands.

R.N.: Well, I've got a long hand...

D.S.: You have beautiful hands..yes. Well you don't ~~how~~ I thank you...

R.N.: Well I certainly..I was glad..that guy Mr. came in and I told him yes indeed I'd tell you anything I knowed. So..and I've told you the nearest truth I know..pretty near all of its so. You know might be some of it guessing at but most of it I told you is so. Ninty five percent of it.

D.S.: Sure. Oh this ~~has~~ been tremendous....